DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 451 870 JC 010 311

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TITLE Tapping into the Academic Workforce: Beyond Complaints to Dialogue, Resolution and Accommodation.
PUB DATE 2000-04-24
NOTE 19p.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adjunct Faculty; College Faculty; *Community Colleges; Educational Policy; *Faculty College Relationship; *Part Time Faculty; Teacher Salaries; *Teaching Conditions; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

This document highlights some of the main problems in using temporary, adjunct, and part-time (TAP) faculty, a practice that is becoming commonplace in higher education, especially at the community college level. Institutions use TAP faculty for several reasons: economic motivation, staffing flexibility in times of fluctuating enrollments, stronger ties to the community, a desire for a wide variety of skills and expertise in teaching specialized courses, and less cost. According to the 1998 Sloan Report, TAP faculty comprised approximately 61% in law, 50% in English and literature, 49% in math and statistics, and 27% in physical sciences. The numbers of TAP faculty are increasing; however, these teachers' benefits, working conditions, salaries, and job security are not. There is a great need for college administrations to implement new personnel policies before further conflicts arise. Recommendations include: offering opportunities for professional development, further integrating TAP faculty into various departments, providing tenure for long-term part-time faculty, setting standards of progression through the salary scale, and developing objective performance data for evaluations whose results can aid in reappointment. The case study of the community colleges in the State of California is discussed with regard to how change might be found by working through the legal system. The employment patterns of Northwest Virginia Community College are also introduced for further insight into the TAP issue and its resolution. Contains 17 references. (CJW)

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ED 451 870

TAPPING into the Academic Workforce:

Beyond Complaints to Dialogue, Resolution and Accommodation.

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April 24, 2000

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Tapping into the Academic Workforce

Beyond Complaints to Dialogue, Resolution and Accommodation

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4-24-00

Outline

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(Patterns, Degree Requirements, Quality Teaching, Institutional Role)

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Part time faculty have voiced the same complaints over and over: low pay, substandard working conditions, a lack of benefits, and no job security. The economics of part-time teaching is the reality of a one-term contract that includes a median pay of $1,500 for a 3 credit hour course, a stationary pay scale, and rare opportunities for full-time employment. The pay per course is regionally driven and can range from $1,000 to $2,500 per three-credit course. Low pay also means that part-time faculty usually make less than half of what a tenured faculty makes per course. Substandard job conditions refers to the lack of office space and convenient access to equipment and support staff. A one- or multi-year part-time contract provides little or no access to the benefits of vacation, sick time, pension opportunities or medical compensation. Job insecurity refers to the absence of a guarantee that one will work for any length of time other than contract to contract. Part-timers simply supplement their resume by stringing a series of contract jobs over time. Available research validates these complaints and confirms that something must be done. Part-time teachers, however, have managed to work a disadvantageous situation to their advantage. They supplement their income, keep their resumes current, gain personal fulfillment, or use the opportunity to get a full-time position. Given the choice, however, most part-time teachers would prefer to be full-time. The academic job market reality, however, does not provide that option. Complaints, it seems, have been documented more than the solutions necessary to amend them.

The job market for faculty positions reveals shifting patterns in the academic workforce that are the result of necessary administrative fiscal

constraints. The research and critical pieces presented in this paper will edify non-tenured faculty complaints, deliberate recent literature on the subject, and elucidate possibilities for future change.

Often used interchangeably, the terms temporary lecturers, adjunct faculty, and part-time faculty refer to the increasing number of non-tenured, or non-standard academic workforce. The circumstances of their hire are different. Hereafter, this non-tenured workforce will be referred to as TAP faculty (Temporary, Adjunct, Part-Time). Temporary or on-call lecturers are those who may or may not have other jobs -- those who instruct a class when called upon, have no written assurance of being asked to instruct again, but who work under contract for usually one semester. Adjunct faculty are those who have full time jobs and take one or two semester teaching contracts that may include a multi-year appointment, often with no promise of tenure. Part-time faculty are those who do not have a regular job and teach when and where they can -- often they are graduate students who want to get their foot in the door and, generally, those who work under a contract-per-course circumstance with no promises (Sloan, 29).

To further clarify definitions, the institution herein refers to the educational establishment that sets overall policy and dictates general rules and regulations. The institution is usually at the national and state level. Administration refers to educational executives or the institution's leadership who execute the policy and guidelines and manage the day-to-day activities of the college within the confines of fiscal reality. The institutional criteria, the administrative mission, and TAP faculty needs must come together to achieve a workable situation for the future. If the institution says there will be an increasing ratio of full- to part-time

faculty, and if the administrative mission is to educate the community maximizing available human resources, then it seems logical to provide equitable fees for services to TAP faculty as well as full-time faculty.

The amount of research data on this subject is growing. The Sloan Report, published in 1998, presents recent academic employment patterns and trends. Other works cited herein are dated between 1995 and 1998 in an attempt to keep the focus current. It appears that problems exist on both sides of the academic fence. On one side, administration struggles to balance its need for a flexible workload with fewer fiscal resources; on the other is the TAP faculty -- a very flexible workforce that suffers from the disadvantages of unmet, basic needs. The institution is guilty of fence sitting because it has not found an acceptable place for TAPs in the academic culture. The overarching problem is money -- not enough available to pay a growing workforce.

TAP faculty appear to be on their own when it comes to easing their circumstances. As their numbers rise, their presence grows and their need increases. So too should their benefits, work conditions, job security and pay. TAP faculty, however, should be treated fairly regardless of the degree of their presence. The problem should be solved now, not later. As mentioned, the dilemma faced by administration is their need for a flexible workforce constrained by fewer resources. TAP faculty have their own dilemma. Because they face administration individually, they are unable to make head-way in improving their condition. Even if one segment of TAP faculty is content, for example the adjuncts, all would agree that they are underpaid for their services.

The Sloan report focuses on academic employment patterns and trends for part-time employees. The report lists TAP faculty numbers

across the nation as 376,000. This represents an increase of 126,000 over an eleven-year period. The proportion of TAP faculty to tenured faculty in public two-year institutions is 60.2% to 39.8% (Sloan 3, Table 1). On average, the academic workforce is dominated by TAP faculty. If the workforce is increasing overall, and the ratio of TAP to tenured faculty has surpassed the 50% mark, the question is why the benefits and pay have not increased in proportion to the need. The ratio in specific disciplines probes the issue further. For example, TAP faculty comprised approximately 61% in law, 50% in English and literature, 49 % in math and statistics, and as low as 27 % in physical sciences and 19% in agriculture and home sciences (Sloan 4, Table 2). These studies show that there are more TAP faculty in law than in physical sciences; but, they do not explain why there is a wide range of differences among the various departments. The report recommends that more studies be done to determine and assess why the levels of part-time faculty usage are so high, for example, in humanities and so low in economics (Sloan, 3). It could be that complaints voiced by TAP faculty relate specifically to departments that teach core education courses, for example, English. If that is so, then all TAP faculty would not face the same problems. The problem could directly relate to specific departments rather than a sense of across-the-board discontent.

The Sloan Report further reflects that the level of degrees held by TAP faculty and tenured faculty accounts for an important difference between the two categories. Most TAP faculty hold an MA or less, with about 15% holding a doctorate. Outcomes show, however, there is no appreciable difference in the classroom success rates of full-time versus TAP faculty (Sloan 5). Skill level, therefore, should not be seen simply as an issue of higher degrees.

The literature points out that institutions are increasing enrollments without a commensurate increase in funds. Given these circumstances, it is understandable that institutions prefer to hire TAP faculty because of their willingness to accept the lower salaries and short contract commitment. The perception of the institution and its administrators that part-timers do not need benefits does not take into account all TAP faculty circumstances and the various ways in which their contracts can be written. The institution lost control over mandatory faculty retirement when the tenure system was introduced in the 1940s. This could explain the workforce shift from tenured to TAP faculty over the past 60 years (Sloan, 7, 24). Full-time faculty's pressure for tenure and achievement of an uncapped retirement age may be forcing the workforce shift. Although the institution cannot control full-time tenured faculty's length of employment, it appears that it can control length of employment for the TAP faculty as well as associated hire practices. Will we see a permanent TAP workforce as attrition erodes the number of full time positions? As the policy maker, the institution controls the purse-strings; as leaders, administration must develop a way to complement the faculty in light of fiscal constraints and increasing student enrollments; and as a flexible academic workforce, TAP faculty deserve a fair salary for service rendered. As retirements occur and full-time hires are not replaced, administrators may find themselves seeking out enlightened ways to integrate the TAP workforce into the college culture and, at the same time, address their complaints.

A comparison of the quality of teaching between full-time and TAP faculty is addressed indirectly in a 1993 study by Gappa and Leslie. They concluded there was no real difference between the two. This conclusion

was drawn despite evidence showing that more full-time than TAP faculty hold Ph.D.s. Not only was quality comparable, but overall job satisfaction lies in the ability of TAP faculty to keep up with developments in their fields, more so then an ability to spend a substantial amount of time on professional development (Sloan 14, Table 6). Data suggests that part-time faculty are as involved in and content with their professional commitment as tenured faculty. It also suggests that TAP faculty do not feel alienated, demoralized or disengaged from their work (Sloan, 13-15). If TAP faculty are professionally employed and content with their professional commitment, then why are the complaints still heard? Why are there no viable solutions proposed? Pay is still inequitable, job security tenuous, and access to benefits lacking.

The proportion of non-standard or temporary faculty in academia is much higher compared to the workforce at large. This suggests that the institution itself may be to blame for the lack of full-time positions because it is either too slow in approach and/or too rigid with standards when it comes to awarding tenure (Sloan, 26). Is the institution the cause of the changing make-up of the workforce? Or, is the community to blame for forcing administration to hold down tuition costs leaving them no choice but to continually restrain salaries in response to market conditions? It is unclear that one system, for example, the traditional tenure track, is the best one for an institution. The subject is better discussed at another level -- one where society is obliged to look at the relationship of knowledge and the learning processes to a community's needs (Sloan 28). Society will decide and control the issue because it is society that makes demands based on perceived needs at any given time.

The workforce composition is changing. Academic administration needs to implement new personnel policies before conflicts arise. It would be a strategic error to wait until there is a critical mass of non-tenure-track faculty before formalizing and implementing organizational procedures (Tolbert/Leslie, 78). Although the change is occurring, few institutions are devoting resources to this process (Tolbert/Leslie, 78). Authors Gappa and Leslie proposed a rethinking of the college workforce. They suggest there should be one faculty that shares work fairly, that collaborates on designing and conducting high quality experiences, and that concentrates on setting high standards for everyone. (Rasell et al/Leslie, 35) An approach such as this could end the double standard of TAP versus full-time faculty. According to research data from a 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, TAP faculty are a diverse group who often bring their workplace skills to academia. This occurs, for example, in the health and law fields. Where some researchers argue that the TAP faculty workforce is large, voluntary, reasonably well-off economically, and professionally qualified for the work they do, others take exception and ask why would equally qualified people voluntarily accept substandard working conditions? Many liberal arts TAP faculty feel compelled to accept employment terms and conditions that could lessen their performance. One answer is that, according to Ernst Benjamin, TAP faculty insist there is a lack of full-time positions; consequently, they feel the need to accept a compensation structure set by the majority of various part-time faculty who seek only supplemental income, and less desirable part-time positions (Benjamin/Leslie, 58). Catherine D. Gaddy claims that the increasing proportions of TAP faculty results in a change in the quality

of academic research (Gaddy/Leslie, 65). The Sloan Report data, however, suggests that there is no substantial change.

Some organizations contend that some adjuncts lack the scholastic skills necessary to be successful teachers. If that is so, the question centers on how to account for the 18% rise from 42% to 60% in utilization of TAP faculty by community colleges from 1960 to 1991. The Sloan Report already indicated there was very little difference in full- and part-time faculty skills and classroom success. In a 1988 report, the National Education Association (NEA) and the Education Commission of the States recommended that to ensure quality skills in the classroom, colleges should reduce the number of part-time and temporary faculty. Donna M. Thompson pointed out that the NEA is a labor union whose primary goal is to protect its members who are full-time faculty (Thompson, 3).

Thompson put forth some reasons why community colleges continue to use TAP faculty: economic motives; staffing flexibility in times of fluctuating enrollments; stronger ties to the community; and a desire for a wide variety of skills and expertise useful in teaching specialized courses (Thompson, 4). She recommended that to entice TAP faculty, administration should offer opportunities for professional development as a top priority. This would enhance the institution's capabilities of providing quality service to the community. Pre-service orientation programs could focus on instructional skills and leave the day-to-day items to the adjunct handbook. In-service programs or ongoing workshops would also enhance skill levels(Thompson, 10-11).

Thompson further states that not only does administration have the responsibility to provide opportunities for ongoing skill development, but it also should make some effort at integrating TAP faculty into various

departments. The key to success in any new program or attempt to facilitate change is the amount of support given it by an administration. TAP faculty are becoming an integral part of the academic workforce. Administration needs to "invest in the development of the human capital of all of its employees -- full- and part-time alike" (Thompson 18).

One way to facilitate change regarding the hiring of TAP faculty is through the legal system as demonstrated by the State of California, a case study. California's Chancellor of the Community Colleges established a task force to investigate the part-time faculty situation. The result of the task force's efforts proposed some possible legal changes that could ensure the continued quality of the community college (Mize, Abstract). A 1970 legislative amendment was made to the California Education Code. Its intent was to improve the conditions and quality of part-time faculty. As enrollments rose, districts hired more temporary employees to work for more hours as 'permanent part-timers' (Mize, 3). In response, part-time faculty unionized and went to court claiming that because part-time faculty taught at least 60% of the regular load they were eligible for tenure. Districts responded by redistributing their hours per term to prevent the tenure argument. By 1986, the Chancellor determined that the evidence of his task force investigation was inconclusive. There were no obvious differences in performance of part-time and full-time faculty. He conceded, however, that the college gave greater support to full-time faculty and this had a positive impact on full-time performance (Mize, 3). California's 1986 Master Plan encouraged part-timers to participate in student advisement and curricular development. Part-timers were those who were employed for six units or more a semester on a contractual basis. The 1987 Commission for Review of the Master Plan determined

that public institutions had to be free to make the best use of available resources, but conceded that the use of part-timers was over-extended. The Board of Governors urged that a pilot program at several institutions be developed with 'rolling contracts' of two to five years in length rather than multiple part-time appointments (Mize, 4). In 1988, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) determined that part-time faculty is a necessary resource, and they urged that they be integrated into academic institutions. By 1998, the California Board of Governors required that there be a core of full-time faculty, and, at the same time, broadened the definition of faculty to be calculated within a 75-25 ratio to include non-instructional as well as instructional faculty (Mize, 8). The example of California's legislation as relates to TAP faculty may only be relevant to those states that have unions; however, it does illuminate one option for TAP faculty if administration does not come to terms with its workforce.

Rita Mize suggests two possible policy options to pursue with regard to hiring full- or part-time faculty: increasing the percentage of credit hours taught by full-time faculty; or keeping the present system with modifications (Mize, 10). She concluded that it is not realistic to eliminate TAP faculty, but that there is, however, a need for more equitable policies for them. Rather than have fiscal circumstances dictate hiring practices, Mize recommended that administration plan and manage the TAP faculty to meet educational goals. Of the forty-three ways, most of which were predictable, that she put forth to improve working conditions for part-time faculty, three are worthy of comment: providing tenure for long-term part-time faculty, setting standards of progression through the salary scale, and developing objective performance data for evaluations whose

results can aid in reappointment (Mize, 10). On the issue of unionizing faculty, Mize claims that if only full-time faculty are union members, and if full-time faculty evaluate part-time faculty, then the process is flawed. The union may have goals and objectives that run counter to the needs of part-time employees. The legalities surrounding TAP hires are still unresolved. Inclusion in the union might solve part-timer complaints regarding working conditions; but, evaluation of part-timers by full-timers, who are sometimes union members, is self-serving.

Institutional policy makers must be the visionaries in remedying the problems associated with the shifting make-up of the academic workforce. They should use pragmatic and strategic practices to remedy specific problems associated with the hiring and maintaining of a TAP faculty. Frederic Jacobs suggests that the circumstances under which TAP faculty are hired should be separated from those under which they work (Jacobs/Leslie, 9). Administrators need to work with a system in place that is flexible and that includes planning, evaluation and quality control to assure predictable and appropriate results. It is the institution, therefore, that faces the dilemma of ethics, practice and policy when it comes to part-time hires.

David W. Leslie pointed out that the invisible, or part-time, faculty do much of the core academic production, but often are denied participation in governance, curriculum development, faculty hiring and related processes (Leslie, 98). As faculty roles shift, they appear to form a vertical differentiation. According to Donald N. Langenberg, there emerges an identifiable subfaculty as a growing part of academic life that has the effect of a division of labor as well as the potential perception of a status differential (Langenberg/Leslie, 39). TAP faculty do a variety of

work, in different settings on more flexible terms and conditions than do full-time faculty. They do so with many types and styles of preparation and with adequate qualifications (Leslie, 95). If TAP faculty contribute the versatility that allows an institution to respond to yielding community needs, then it should follow that institutions provide work spaces and support staff help, fair salaries, and work opportunities as a reward for their services.

Benjamin argued that on average, part-time and full-time faculty have more similarities than differences in their backgrounds and professionalism. If TAP faculty problems are associated with substandard terms and conditions of employment, then why would equally qualified people voluntarily accept substandard contract conditions? Does the answer lie in the assumption that the TAP faculty credentials are inferior to those of full-time faculty? Are full-time faculty more professionally prepared than part-time faculty? Benjamin goes on to say that part time faculty are about half as likely as their full time counterparts to have Ph.D.s and this could be the cause of contract problems (Benjamin/Leslie, 52, Table 5.2). Administration's reliance on TAP faculty in fields such as health and law supports the argument that they bring workplace skills to the institution; whereas, their reliance on part-time faculty in English and Math is consistent with the argument that part-time faculty are heavily employed in core academic studies (Benjamin/Leslie, 47). Part-time liberal arts faculty complain that there is a lack of full-time positions. Often they are forced to accept a compensation structure that has been endorsed by the majority of part-time faculty who seek only supplemental income or a far less desirable part-time position (Benjamin/Leslie, 58).

Barbara Wyles points out that perspective employers can interpret a part-time teaching experience on a resume as a questionable pattern of temporary jobs (Wyles, 90). She offered insight on employment patterns and policies of Northern Virginia Community College. The College employs about 500 full time faculty and approximately 1,100 part time faculty with a student population of 63,000 spread out over 5 campuses. Part-timers represent 68.75% of the faculty. The Alexandria campus, the second largest, has 11,340 students, 179 full-time faculty and 325 part-time faculty (Wyles, 90). The decentralization of hiring and policy making practices presents a problem. Department heads are not necessarily skilled in human resources, yet are given the responsibility to respond immediately to increases in full time student enrollments. Rewards are few, orientations only once a year, and TAP faculty are restricted by the Virginia Community College System policy to teach nine credit hours per semester and nineteen per year. The institutional exclusion of TAP faculty from the teaching-learning enterprise is problematic. Because they are so readily available, TAP faculty allow for staffing of new courses as driven by market demand (Wyles, 92).

The model for academic careers is the traditional tenure-track faculty appointment. Academic institutions are by nature conservative organizations especially when it comes to curricular change. TAP faculty could very well serve a useful purpose by meeting demonstrated needs for instruction in emerging areas, for example in English as a Second Language (ESL). In the long run, according to Janet Lawrence, it is difficult to project trends in academic careers because careers are placed among various contexts, some of which are disciplinary, institutional and individual (Lawrence/Leslie, 27).

Emilio Santa Rita discusses a possible theory for integrating adjuncts into the academic community that was originally conceptualized by Malcolm Knowles in 1970. The theory of androgogy includes the assumption that learners are self-directed and can be given problem-centered activities with immediate applications. Santa Rita proposed a three-tiered model related to the theory of androgogy, or self-directed learning: participants take a course in fundamental instructional skills, are then exposed to more advanced teaching topics, and then have to design and analyze the effectiveness of their own skills (Santa Rita, Abstract). The basic assumptions of the theory of self-directed learning are: adjuncts are adult professionals; their training must be ongoing and sustained, both formal and informal; they can initiate and lead most of their own integration; and, the goals of the adjuncts are similar to those of the institution. This approach and model could replace the novice-professional paradigm, the top-down approach that addresses administrative concerns but ignores the fact that adjuncts are often highly experienced. The biggest source of part-timer discontent is their invisibility, lack of respect from full-timers and the failure of their institutions to reward them. All of this can be remedied if there is a paradigm shift and efforts are based on adult-to-adult communications (Santa Rita, 3-6).

John Huffman asks many questions about the circumstances of TAP faculty but focuses on the adjunct segment. He asks how well can an adjunct's department and institution function without them? Do adjuncts want to proceed on their own or do they want to remedy problems in concert with full-time colleagues and TAs? If academia depends on adjuncts, does it mean that adjuncts have more power than they suppose? Is the problem a lack of power, or an illusion of fear? (Huffman, 5-6) The

questions are on target for all TAP faculty, and not just the adjunct segment. Asking the questions in this way could disassociate certain issues from the response.

Administrators are talking among themselves looking for solutions. The reality of the education market is that academic institutions need both a fixed yet elastic workforce that can respond to shifting enrollment patterns. This workforce would be fixed because a pre-screened pool of teachers have committed to their desire for employment. It would be elastic because the available TAP faculty stands ready to respond to the ebb and flow of market needs. Surveys and reports point out that more studies with comparative analyses across disciplines need to be done in order to better gauge if the complaints are discipline-specific or general. A new theoretical model other than the traditional novice-professional one is needed. It would seem that the theory of androgogy, or self directed learning, has more appeal if only because it treats all types of part-time faculty as responsible and capable adult learners.

TAP faculty complaints are duly noted and grounded in real circumstances. Although the dialogue over what can be done to address the complaints of substandard pay, working conditions and benefits is continuing, now is the time for forward-thinking institutions and an enlightened leadership to step-up the process and implement substantial changes -- changes that reflect the value of a flexible part-time, and often highly experienced, workforce whose numbers exceed those of full-timers. A long term goal could be a change to the culture of the college to accommodate a new flexible workforce as the institution and administration move into the 21st century.

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April 24, 2000

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